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RR RUEHWEB

DE RUEHMK #0049 0281241
ZNR UUUUU ZZH
R 281241Z JAN 10 ZDK
FM AMEMBASSY MANAMA
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC 9172
INFO RUEHZM/GULF COOPERATION COUNCIL COLLECTIVE
RHBVAKS/COMUSNAVCENT
RHMFIUU/HQ USCENCOM MACDILL AFB FL

UNCLAS MANAMA 000049

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: N/A
TAGS: [PGOV](#) [SOCI](#) [TBIO](#) [BA](#)
SUBJECT: BAHRAIN EAGER TO SUPPORT U.S./OIC POLIO
ERADICATION EFFORTS

REF: STATE 6698

¶1. (U) Summary: A State/USAID/CDC delegation met with GOB officials to discuss the joint U.S./OIC polio eradication effort. The Minister of Health pledged Bahrain's full support in working with the U.S., GCC, and OIC member states and told the delegation that polio would be on the agenda of next week's meeting of GCC Health Ministers in Abu Dhabi. End summary.

¶2. (U) The delegation met separately with Minister of Health Dr. Faisal bin Yacoub Al Hamer and MFA Director of Bilateral Relations Dr. Dhafer Al Umran on January 27. Noting the desire to fulfill the President's Cairo speech commitment to work with the OIC to reinvigorate polio eradication efforts, the delegation discussed ways in which Bahrain and other GCC states could contribute to the effort - by providing technical and in-kind assistance, and by lending diplomatic and political support within Islamic and international councils.

¶3. (U) Al Hamer pledged Bahrain's full support of the effort and suggested that it could provide experts to assist in vaccination efforts, advisers to assist with eradication efforts in Muslim countries, and moral support within the GCC and OIC. Noting that the U.S. delegation would later meet with OIC officials in Jeddah, Al Hamer suggested that they discuss forming an OIC task force to create ownership within that body and that the delegation follow up by providing a concrete list of suggested contributions Bahrain could make to the overall eradication effort. Meanwhile, he said, polio would be on the agenda of the GCC Health Ministers at their upcoming meeting in Abu Dhabi. He committed to work with his counterparts to develop a consensus in support of the U.S./OIC effort. The delegation also suggested that it would be helpful for Bahrain and others to support the eradication effort at the World Health Assembly, and Undersecretary for Public Health Mariam Al Jalahma interjected that Bahrain would attend and would be a positive force on polio.

¶4. (U) Al Umran also pledged support to the polio eradication effort and committed to discuss the issue with the Foreign Minister in order to determine how Bahrain could provide diplomatic support through its embassies in endemic countries such as Pakistan. He also suggested involving the Islamic Development Bank in the U.S./OIC effort, and as a past president of one of Manama's three Rotary Clubs, noted that the group had achieved great success over the years in combating polio. Al Umran suggested that the Rotary Club International may have some useful experience to share.
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